

Public Forum meeting – January 28, 2008

Community Development Committee (CDC) report to Select Board and comments from the audience.

Note taker – Mary Jane Laus

Attending: *CDC committee members*: Claude Tellier, Mary Jane Laus, Paulette Brooks, Isaac BenEzra, Jana McClure, Tamara Rutland-Mills. *Town Staff*: Larry Shaffer, Roy Rosenblatt. *Select Board*: Garry Weiss, Alicia Brewer, Hwei-Ling Greeney, Anne Awad, Rob Kusner. *Other attendees*: Vincent O'Connor, Andrew Steinberg, Jonathan Nelms, Alan Powell, Irvin Rhodes, Diana Stein, Alice Carlozzi, Elaine Brighty, Stephanie O'Keeffe, Stan Maron, Michelle Morris, Cheryl Zoll, Frank Wells, Ted Newman (+2 additional unnamed)

Roy Rosenblatt addressed the body with a brief summary of the recommendations put forth by the CDC for designating distribution of the funds the Town of Amherst hopes to receive from block grant funds. Amherst is eligible for a maximum of \$800,000 for housing and community development and social services activities benefiting low- and moderate-income citizens.

Recommendations:

- \$480,000 to renovate the North Amherst School. The cost is in excess of the 33% of assessed value of the building therefore requiring that the entire building be brought up to code. The application deadline is 2/15 not enough time for the Town to get a waiver.  
*Question – have CPA funds been considered for the school through the Historical Commission?*  
*Will the future of the school involve low or moderate income occupants, a requirement from the state for a duration of 5 years minimum?*

Larry Shaffer recommends a feasibility study this year on Amherst Survival Center (ASC) space which may suggest a very different use of the building. Major concerns about liabilities relative to physical structure.

- \$85,000 Social service program providing services for homeless individuals, managed through Center for Human Development (Homeless effort)
- \$75,000 Continuation of Town's childcare tuition assistance program
- \$160 for administration of the grant, salaries, etc.

Total request \$800,000

Alicia Brewer reviewed the dollars involved in the various projects. If another Public Hearing takes place it must be scheduled at least 2 weeks before the deadline. Gerry Weiss suggested that we can continue discussion without change of Public Forum.

#### Public Comment

1. Stan Maron - Need to use some of the CDBG funding for the homeless
2. John Nelms - Use extra dollars for social services
3. Vince O'Connor – Important proposal demonstrates ongoing capital needs, eligibility, ASC proposal. Could use CDBG funds for Rolling Green in next year
4. Isaac BenEzra – reason for putting additional \$70,000 in budget to cover services; need a process for discussion with Finance Committee.
5. Stan Maron – “It’s like the greyhound theraph, send it elsewhere”. “Our committee should have oversight on #5 – the feasibility study for a single-room occupancy facility.”
6. Cheryl Zoll – looking at future, we’re (ASC) not out on the street
7. Michelle Morris – meeting subsidies (addressing homelessness) – state subsidies
8. Tec Newman – feasibility – single-room occupancy – build permanent affordable housing, keep funding in CDBG

Rob Kusner moved for a revised budget for Human Services however after much discussion this was changed to a request. Larry Shaffer discussed his model and explained why his strong recommendation for a change in the direction of funding. Anne Awad stated that 4 of the 5 SB members wanted human services factored into the budget and the implications for shifting to CDBG funding. \$70,000 represents 0.001% of the budget – this is symbolic.